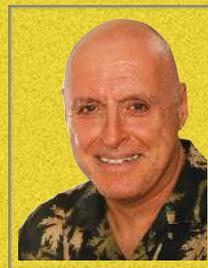


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



128 The Perils of Unclear Communication

Have you ever had a situation where workers trying to serve you sometimes use industry jargon, or abbreviations that they understand, but you don't? I'm Jerry Roberts and let's communicate clearly on why that's not a good idea, today, on The Extra Point.

I think the first inside bit of abbreviated jargon that I recall coming across had a pretty happy ending, at least at that time in my life. It was BLT. Bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwich. It wouldn't work today as pig doesn't show up on a vegan's menu very often, but then, I was on board.

Every industry has its own language, its own set of abbreviations and buzz words, and as long as all the people communicating clearly understand that language, there's no problem.

Unfortunately, too often, customers aren't clear on what is being said, or the references in emails and letters. Sometimes you can guess and get by, but frequently there is doubt or the individual just skips right past the things not understood.

And as far as jargon and abbreviations go, I can't think of any field that has more than the health care business.

ACL, ADHD, BP, DNC, DNR, IBD, IBS, ICU, IUD, PFT, PT, PTSD, TMJ, and on it goes. There must be hundreds, maybe thousands of them. Medical providers and health insurers get it, but most of us don't. Could that ever be a problem?

I get a referral to take a blood test a few days ago. I get there early to avoid having to wait too long, and I'm second in line. A good start.

About 20 minutes later I'm called and the whole procedure takes less than 10 minutes. I'm done, hurray. I can move on to the rest of

my day. But wait, the technician then hands me the cup.

The cup?

I said, "Uhh, nobody told me about having to give urine today. Just blood." She pointed to the lab order, and the abbreviation UA. "Yes sir, UA is urinalysis."

I groaned. "Well," I said, "If I'd known that I wouldn't have gone to the bathroom just before I came here for the blood test. How much do you need?"

The other technician in the room said, "Not much." I responded, "Yeah, well, that's as good as it's going to get — not much."

So I go to the restroom, thinking how it would have been so different had I known what "UA" referred to. I mean, the clinic had said the words, "blood test," not "BT." If you're going to use one, shouldn't you use the other? O, consistency, where art thou?"

How did it end, you ask? I was able to muster up "not much," which was just enough, and I delivered the cup back to the technician, who gave me a silent attaboy, and I was done.

Use real words that people understand, not abbreviations and jargon they might not know. They'll appreciate you THIS MUCH, which is a whole lot better than "not much."

That's The Extra Point. Get out there and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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